

VETERANS BENEFITS AWARENESS TASK FORCE
MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION
Thursday, December 5, 2002 — 10:00 AM
1719 Southridge Drive
Jefferson City, MO

In attendance:

Aquilla Butler, Public Information Officer, Dept. of Public Safety; **John Eckhoff**, Veterans Service Manager St. Louis County Dept. of Human Services; **Ralph Durnbaugh**, Director of Planning; **Courtney Fadler**, Lt. Governor's Office; **Stephen Gaither**, Public Affairs Office Columbia VA Hospital; **Bill Groninger**, Director Branson Veteran Task Force; **Sharon Keith**, Director, Service to Veterans Program; **Lt. Governor Joe Maxwell**, State of Missouri; **Maria Chappelle-Nadal**, Elderly Advocate, Lt. Governor Office; **Carl H. Niewoehner**, Chairman, Missouri Veterans Commission; **General Shull**, State of Missouri, Adjutant General Office; **Kathy Sturgeon**, St. Louis County Dept. of Human Services; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Ronald Taylor**, Executive Director, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Sargeant Major Roger Green**, Missouri National Guard; **James Hughes**, State Commandor MO Veterans of Foreign Wars

- I. Opening Remarks** – Joe Maxwell, Lt. Governor, State of Missouri, thanked members for coming. The next Supermarket will be held on December 7 at KCI Expo Center in Kansas City.

- II. Updates**—Ron Taylor reported that for federal fiscal year 2002 there was an increase of 23.7% in benefit claims for Missouri and a 6.6% increase nationwide.

Ralph Durnbaugh and John Eckhoff discussed report on Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits that was distributed to the members of the task force. The report will help in planning of future supermarkets throughout the state. Information included in the report consists of what is needed to perform supermarkets, development & implementation criteria in determining sites, history, concept and committee building, components to include for successful events.

Three levels of service available to fit any area of the state where the Missouri Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force has determined the need for a Supermarket of Veterans Benefits event.

Level I Supermarket – attendance of 300-500 veterans and 50 or more agency/organizations participating.

Level II Supermarket – serve 100-300 veterans and have 30 or more agency participants.

Level III Supermarket – serve 100 or fewer veterans and have 10-25 agency/organizations participants.

The size of a Supermarket project does not determine the success of the event. A successful Supermarket of Veterans Benefits is one that completes the mission that the local Supermarket committee determines through their planning process.

The Agency/Organization Data Form included in the report should be a continuous form used for all Supermarkets statewide in determining statistical information.

The Feedback & Comments Form is also important and helps to assist with future Supermarket planning.

After much discussion on 2003 Target Areas for Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits the following locations were decided:

March – Joplin
April – Springfield
May – Kirksville
June – Cape Girardeau/St. Genevieve
August – Harrisonville/Clinton
September – Grandview (South Kansas City)
October – Arnold
November – St. Joseph
December – Jennings (North St. Louis County)

Committees will set up 60 days prior to the Supermarket to organize information and get advertising out.

John Eckhoff will explore idea of putting a team of 10 people together and conduct informational fairs for smaller communities interested in doing something for their veterans.

James Hughes also presented to Ralph Durnbaugh a manual used in organizing the Kansas City area Supermarkets.

Ron Taylor will draft a letter summarizing the past year success of the Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force accomplishments and thanking officers for their hard work. MVC will provide addresses of Missouri Veterans Commission STV officers and service organizations officers to the Lt. Governor's office for mail out.

Ron Taylor also informed the Task Force members that we are working to organize "Veterans Appreciation Day" at the Capitol Building for January. **The date is set for Wednesday, January 22.** The Lt. Governor expressed interest in holding a press conference in his office that day and to also have a brief meeting with the Task Force members.

Lt. Governor informed the Task Force members of the recent time line meeting items discussed:

TIME LINE DATES

December –	VBATF Meeting Following VBATF meeting a letter to go to Service to Veterans Program, Service Organizations, and volunteers thanking those involved of the task forces achievements over the past year. Lt. Governor meeting with Governor to discuss incorporating \$50,000 to MVC Budget to continue 800 # for raising veterans awareness.
January-	Press release on "Veterans Appreciation Day" at the Capitol. Door knocking Project- Lt. Governor's office Governor State of State Address Open House evening prior to "Veterans Appreciation Day" at the Capitol discussed. Hal will continue to work on this. Invitations to Legislators and staff. Possible funding through MVC Foundation.

January-August - Lt. Governor State tours. Discussed inviting Service Officers from those areas to assist with VA benefits questions.

March-April - Courtney Fadler researching Media campaign targeting St. Louis City and Kansas City through TV and radio. Budget expected to be \$20,000 with 9,000 hits on radio and TV.

Bill Groninger reported Veterans Week in Branson is scheduled for November 5-11, 2003. Approximately 30% of attendance during this week is Missouri Veterans. Mr. Groninger also informed the Task Force that the Branson area veterans would like to support and participate in the Supermarket in Springfield.

Discussion of Senior Rx Program database indicates 2,484 veterans not receiving VA Benefits. Jill Talken contacted Bill Roots to get names and addresses of those individuals so that we can send a mail stuffer out to them giving them the 800 # to call and website address, waiting to hear back from him.

Ralph Durnbaugh indicated that over the next year he will contact County Tax Collectors and explore the possibilities of including mail stuffers in with the tax bills for next year. Another suggestion from the task force is to explore possible Banks and Credit Unions to assist in raising awareness.

James Hughes reported the Veterans of Foreign Wars is sponsoring a youth soccer club in the Kansas City area and a banner has been designed that will hang at the stadium during the games that will include MVC 800#. These games will reach 75% to 80% Hispanic spectators. Referral Forms will be available on site at these events.

The Lt. Governor and Carl Niewoehner will soon begin fundraising efforts to raise \$40,000 for the Task Force. Letters will be mailed out and phone calls will be made. Anyone who knows of people interested in committing please provide their names to the Lt. Governor or Carl.

John Eckhoff advised the Vietnam Veterans Round Table Group may be interested in assisting. He will get information on them to the Lt. Governor.

Ralph Durnbaugh handed out information to the members on the 800# statistics. Call spike when Supermarkets are approaching. The Lt. Governor noted that St. Louis only represents 9% of the calls.

The next meeting will be held on January 22.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.